

There is a direct maritime route from Britain to Santander in Northern Spain and a good body of evidence for exotic insects to be transported in caravans. In fact, the possibilities are legion — it could even have arrived here in damp moss collected for hanging baskets! The risk of desiccation presumably militates against unassisted long-distance travel.

On the Brecon Beacons *H. longipalpis* shared the habitat of the following beetles dominated by *Amischa analis* (Gravenhorst) (33%) and *Hypnoidus riparius* (Fabricius) (22%) with *Bradycellus harpalinus* (Serville) (1%) with virtually blackened antennae, *Gabrieus subnigritulus* (Reitter) (1%), *Quedius boops* (Gravenhorst) (2%), *Boreophilia* spp. (identity not pursued for the moment following discussion with Mr A.A. Allen) (5%), and the rare (sometimes montane), wide-ranging, hygrophilous species *Oxypoda procerula* Mannerheim (1%). Notable beetles nearby were *Carabus arvensis* Herbst. and *Acidota crenata* (Fabricius).

I wish to thank Mr A.A. Allen and Mr P.R. Holmes (Welsh Peatland Invertebrate Survey) for advice on specific matters.

References: Holmes, P.R. Boyce, D.C., & Reed, D.K., 1990. *Hadrognathus longipalpis* (Mulsant & Rey) (Col.: Staphylinidae) in South Wales. *Br. J. Ent. Nat. Hist.* 3: 192. Lott, D.A., 1989. *Hadrognathus longipalpis* (Mulsant & Rey) (Col.: Staphylinidae) new to the British Isles. *Entomologist's Gaz.* 40: 221-222.— P.F. WHITEHEAD, Moor Leys, Little Comberton, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 3EP.

Magpie moth, *Abraxas grossulariata* (L.), (Lep.: Geometridae) and other caterpillars on gooseberry, *Ribes uva-crispa*, in south Cumbria

I was interested to read B.K. West's paper (*Ent. Rec.* 103: 89-92) discussing the decline in urban populations of *A. grossulariata* (in N.W. Kent in particular) as possibly being connected with an abandonment of gooseberry and other *Ribes* species, and *Euonymus japonicus*, as foodplants. Urban populations may have suffered similar declines quite widely; for example, among the 200 or so literature citations for *A. grossulariata* listed in the Scottish Insect Records Index (see Shaw, *Ent. Rec.* 99: 37-38 for an account of this resource) there are enough that specify foodplant to show that, at least in the East, gooseberry and *E. japonicus* were also regularly used in and around Scottish towns when the moth sometimes locally reached pest status up to and including the middle third of this century, since when it seems to have declined considerably.

When I lived in Reading and Oxford in the late 1960s and 1970s I remember that *A. grossulariata* occurred commonly on *E. japonicus* in quiet parts of the towns and on *Prunus spinosa* in the countryside. Perhaps I rarely looked, but the only time I can recall seeing larvae on gooseberry was in my parents' garden in Drayton St Leonard, a relatively isolated Oxfordshire village, as recently as 1989. Prompted by West's article, I took advantage of a long weekend at the end of May 1991 at Beetham, just in

Cumbria near the Lancashire border, to see whether in this rural setting the fairly numerous patches of gooseberry growing wild in hedges and in woodland supported *A. grossulariata* larvae.

The results of this investigation (in which I was greatly helped by my daughters Zerynthia and Melitaea) were very interesting, as all of the species of lepidopteran larvae found had a clear-cut preference for either fully exposed plants or those growing in almost completely shaded situations. *A. grossulariata* was present on most gooseberry bushes in sunny hedgerows but entirely absent on plants in full shade. Altogether 46 were collected from about ten well separated stands. The behaviourally similar larvae of the geometrid *Semiothisa wauaria* (L.) were also found only on gooseberry growing in the sun (15 on four stands), as were about 15 larvae of the noctuid *Conistra* sp. (probably *vaccinii* (L.)), collected more or less singly (and feeding also on other plants). In complete contrast, larvae of the geometrid *Eulithis prunata* (L.) were found only on more or less fully shaded gooseberry in woodland understorey (22 on eight stands), and no other Lepidoptera were found on such plants.

A large colony of *A. grossulariata* was also found, more or less accidentally, on a hedgerow stand of *Prunus ?cerasifera*, and in another place a few larvae were noticed feeding on *Corylus avellana*, again in a sunny hedge. The tachinid fly *Phryxe nemea* (Meigen) had found a few of the *A. grossulariata* on each of the three foodplants from which they were collected, but parasitism was at a very disappointingly low level overall — and certainly did not stand any comparison between plant (or even Lepidoptera) species.

Whether the demonstration that in rural N.W. England gooseberry continues to support *A. grossulariata* has any bearing on West's observations on foodplants in N.W. Kent is debatable, but I wonder whether it might be merely attrition from factors such as the increased levels of electric street lighting, garden pesticides and pollution from road traffic, rather than a change of diet as such, that has harried *A. grossulariata* from previously favourable urban and suburban environments generally?— MARK R. SHAW, National Museums of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF.

***Utetheisa pulchella* L. the Crimson-speckled Footman (Lep.: Arctiidae) in the Channel Isles**

The contributions by J. Clarke and A.M. Riley in the March-April 1991 issue of the *Entomologist's Record* (103: 69 and 100) recording the capture of five specimens of *Utetheisa pulchella* in Cornwall and Devon have stimulated me to report the two seen in the Channel Islands at about the same time.

On 2.x.1990 D. Buxton showed me the five specimens which had come into his kitchen in Vallée des Vaux, Jersey, an inland valley about two miles north of Saint Helier. This was two days after the first of the English